

Pauline Kirby-Coley
Childcare Learning Centers, Inc.
SUPPORT AAC RECOUPMENT OF STATE COSTS ATTRIBUTABLE TO LOW WAGE EMPLOYERS
Before the Human Services Committee
March 12, 2015

Good afternoon Senator Moore, Representative Abercombie, and members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Pauline Kirby-Coley. I am a full time School Readiness Assistant Teacher at the Childcare Learning Center, Inc. in Stamford CT.

I am writing this testimony in support SB1044 AAC the Recoupment of State Costs Attributable to Low Wage Employers.

As you know, this bill would require large employers paying less than \$15 per hour to pay a fee to the state. The funds generated from this fee will be appropriated to the Department of Social Services and Development Services and the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). Currently this bill applies to low wage employers with 500 or more employees. We would request that the committee reduce this to employers with 250 employees.

It is imperative that the funds appropriated to the OEC be used to improve early childhood education in the state with an emphasis on raising the wages of early childhood teachers like myself.

I am testifying today that the wages early childhood educators make are impossible to live on. We are not even able to provide for our families' basic needs – food, clothing and shelter. I will not even mention health care or even education.

This is a very important issue to me, because it is very hard for me to live on what I get paid. America's future depends on the effectiveness of what we do daily, but somehow our salary does not reflect that. I am in turmoil every month with my family when they see how hard I work and at the end of the month I still have to ask for loans to be able to pay my bills. I could be working in the nursing field as a Certified Nurse's Aide, which is at the very basic of the nursing profession and get better pay than what is given to a teacher with an Associate Degree.

I am a single parent with two teenage girls, that has no choice but to work another job on the weekend just to be able to pay my rent. I get paid so little that I have to get state health insurance and food stamps for my two children. There are many days that I leave work not knowing what I am going to give my children for dinner.

I am currently working on my Associate Degree and many times I ask myself, is it even worth it? It will just be another \$1.50. I will still be at the bottom of the food chain. I had to disconnect my cable, internet (which we all need for school) and my phone, because it was a choice of paying these bills and paying my rent. Right now I am living in a one bedroom apartment, sleeping on my couch so my two

girls can sleep comfortable together in the same bed. On Sunday night when I leave my second job at 12am, I am expected to be very effective on Monday morning.

We work with these children and their families 40hours a week, 51 weeks a year. When I compare my salary (approximately \$23,000) to the public school starting salary (\$48,695), it leaves me to wonder. We are expected to work closely with the public school in order to get the children ready for kindergarten, even though we are not being compensated enough. It is the favor of God that has been keeping me from being homeless. I really love my job.

We really appreciate your attention to this issue. Help us to keep the passion that we have, for the very valuable job that we do. Thank you.